

AN INQUIRY INTO THE HISTORY OF THE CURRENT
ENGLISH NAMES OF NORTH AMERICAN
LAND BIRDS.

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TECHNICAL nomenclature is the embodiment of that orderly and definite arrangement of knowledge which constitutes a science. It serves to symbolize a conception of the relationships that exist between living beings, one with another, and is at once the expression of a logical system of classification; a working basis for the ideal scheme which the mind constructs from observed facts. It is eminently a rational process. In direct contrast to this is the vernacular — the loose, quite indefinite and often haphazard way of naming things, that has its root in the soil of common life. The stratum out of which it springs is emotional rather than rational. In ornithology these two contrasted forms of the embodied ideal — the technical or scientific and the vernacular names — have been of more equal value than in many other branches of natural history, from the fact that birds have always presented themselves to men's minds in a peculiarly attractive way. Most of us think of the various kinds of birds, certainly of the more familiar ones, in terms of the vernacular rather than in the garb of science. A Song Sparrow is a Song Sparrow more often than a *Melospiza melodia* as well to the ornithologist as to the untechnical wayfarer.

A respectable antiquity attaches itself to the vernacular. Long before the scientific mind had invaded the field of natural history the folk had given voice to its ideas about various animate and inanimate things. A vast vocabulary of popular names was an early heritage of the common people. With this stock of names and notions about Old World birds the colonists in Virginia and New England were fairly well equipped, and the more familiar birds of the new country soon received names indicative of some trait or likeness to certain of the Old World varieties. Mark Catesby in his *History of Carolina* was the first one to give any substantial account of American birds, and his work contains an

array of names, some of them more or less familiar in the speech of to-day. To William Bartram we owe a large number of our common bird names, names that reached the intellectual world of eighteenth century England through the works of Edwards, Pennant and Latham. Alexander Wilson was likewise a large debtor to Bartram for the names of numerous species, but he blazed his own trail by applying names to species discovered by himself as well as in the recasting of many Bartramian names.

In the present inquiry I have arranged the matter of the history of our American bird names under the following six heads —

- I. Names of Old English origin applied to American Birds,
- II. Names derived from a Latin equivalent.
- III. Names suggested by voice.
- IV. Names suggested by some peculiar habit or habitat.
- V. Names suggested by color or other external feature.
- VI. Names suggested by geographical locality (place-names) or in honor of some person.

I. NAMES OF OLD ENGLISH ORIGIN.

Many of the Catesbian names of birds undoubtedly originated in the vernacular of the colonists and some are clearly of Old English ancestry. In the main they are of generic rather than of specific application, as is the case with most of the folk terms for natural objects. The specific distinction is often one of locality merely, as for example "the cuckow of Carolina." Relationship is often broadly recognized by the people and embodied in a general name with appropriate qualifications to indicate minor differences or differences in distribution. The "species" of the *profanum vulgus*, however, more nearly corresponds to the generic conception of the naturalist, even in some cases to the idea embodied in the term "family."

A number of these Old World bird names, given to American birds, appear very early in the history of English speech. In a vocabulary compiled by Archbishop Ælfric toward the close of the tenth century (955-1020 A. D.) there is a *Nomina Avium* in which a number of bird names appear, though somewhat different from their modern form. In this list the Robin Redbreast is called

"rudduc" or "raddock" which long continued to be its general English name and is probably still alive in local dialects. The word appears as a variant of the modern "ruddy," referring no doubt to the russet of the bird's breast. The earliest recorded instance of the use of the popular epithet "robin," which as a word of endearment has been transferred to many different birds throughout the English speaking world, occurs in the *Nomina Avium* of an English vocabulary of the fifteenth century where the name appears as "robynet redbreast," literally "little robin redbreast." Our American Robin was known to the early southern colonists as the "Fieldfare" and is so termed by Catesby ("The Fieldfare of Carolina," Vol. I, 29). The bird has many of the qualities of the Fieldfare, and like its British congener came from the north in autumn, scattering over the cleared lands in loose flocks. William Bartram (Travels, 290) speaks of it as the "Fieldfare or robin redbreast," and Kalm mentions it under the latter name (English Trans., II, 90). Our familiar name "robin" is thus a contraction of the "robin redbreast" of old English speech.

In the *Nomina Avium* of Ælfric the cuckoo occurs as "geac." In some provincial dialects it is still called a "gowk," a survival of the little altered Anglo-Saxon name. "Cuckoo" or "Cuckow" (the latter an earlier form of the name and given as such by Catesby) is undoubtedly derived through later Norman speech (French *coucou*; Italian *cucco* or *cuculo*; old English *cuccu*). The German name *kuckuk* or *koekoek*, the Danish *kukker* or *gjög*, and the Swedish *gök* are clearly allied to the Anglo-Saxon *geac* or *gowk*, all being undoubted variants expressive of the bird's voice, and the same is true of "cuckoo" and its variants.¹ The colonists were not deceived in giving to the American species its rightful name, though Catesby may have been the first to bestow it.

"Crow" appears in Ælfric's vocabulary as *crawe*; "kite" as *glida* and *glede*, the last name continuing down to the fifteenth century. The Anglo Saxon *staern* or *staer* (later *stare*) has become the modern "starling."

A manuscript in the Royal Library at Brussels, of eleventh

¹To call a man a "gawk" (simpleton) appears equivalent to calling him a "cuckoo," a term of no uncertain meaning in the old days.

century date, contains a number of bird names among which are the *Gos-hafoc* (literally "Goose hawk") modernized to "Goshawk," and *Spear-hafoc* ("Sparrow hawk"). It seems curious that our little American Sparrow Hawk has not borne the name of its near relative the Kestrel rather than that of the quite different Sparrow Hawk of the Old World. "Turtle" was an old name for the Dove and appears as such in Catesby ("The Turtle of Carolina," I, 24). It originated, as Skeat observes, from an effort to express the cooing note and is altogether different from the word used to designate the reptile of the same name. This last was rendered by English sailors into "turtle" from the Spanish *tortuga*.

Wren, Sparrow and Swallow appear in these old vocabularies as *Wraenna*, *Spearwa* and *Swealewe*. The first of these names Skeat asserts is derived from a base *Wrin*, to squeal, chirp or whine, in allusion to the bird's voice. A curious old belief existed among the folk of several European countries that the Wren was the "King of Birds." Hence, probably the generic term *Regulus* formerly applied to various species of Wren, and, likewise, its English equivalent "Kinglet." "Sparrow" is literally a "flutterer" (*Spar*, to quiver), and "Swallow" means a "tossor, or mover to and fro; from its flight" (Skeat). "Lark" has been softened down from the Old English "laverok" or "laverock" (Anglo-Saxon *laverce*), literally "a Worker of Guile," from some old superstition regarding the bird as of ill omen. The bestowal of this name upon an American bird allied to the starlings was no doubt due to an effort on the part of the early settlers to name birds after the more familiar ones of the homeland. The ground-nesting habits, the long hind claw, the loud twittering flight notes and clear song of the American bird may have given some slight reason for this incongruous title.

"Thrush" with its variants "throstle" and "throstle-kok," as applied to the Song Thrush (*Turdus musicus*) of Europe, is an old word and appears in its older forms in a treatise by Walter de Biblesworth at the end of the thirteenth century. In the Brussels Manuscript "throstle" seems to refer to the Missel Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*). The Song Thrush is also referred to by its other old English name of "Maviz" (later "Mavis"). In this same treatise of de Biblesworth's the European Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) is

spoken of as "ousel" or "hosel-brit," and likewise by its Old English Name of "Merle." Later it became "Ousel-cock" as in the quaint ditty in *Midsummer-Nights' Dream* —

"The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throistle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill.
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo grey,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer, nay; . . ."

"Mawys" or "Mavis" as a dialectic name has lasted down to the present day in the counties of East England. It seems curious that it was not transferred to any American thrush notably the Wood Thrush. "Osel" is clearly the parent word of the modern "Ousel" and in this latter form is still applied to an allied species of the European Blackbird — the Ring-ousel (*T. torquatus*), as well as to a distinct, though related, family — the Dippers or Water Ousels (Cinclidæ).

Without doubt the word "Thrasher," applied to the birds of the American genus *Toxostoma*, is a variant of "Thrush" and "Throistle," for we find "Thrushel" and "Thrusher" as variants in the Provincial English dialects. The term "Thrasher" occurs in Barton's 'Fragments' (1799), and Wilson also uses the name as a vernacular in his account of the Brown Thrush or "Ferruginous Thrush" (*Toxostoma rufum*) as he calls it, both of which facts are clear evidence as to the early current use of this common name for the species in question. Catesby figures the bird under the title "Fox-coloured Thrush" (I, 28). In the South it is known here and there as the "Sandy Mocker" and formerly as the "French Mockingbird," this last from the fact that its song was considered inferior to that of the true Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) — all things French being regarded with a certain contempt by the English colonists. There is a curious suggestion of the throistle's song in the song of our Brown Thrasher, a fact also noted by Wilson, and this may have given rise to the current vernacular name.

In a metrical vocabulary, supposedly of the fourteenth century, "sparrow" appears in its modern form; likewise "larke," "pye"

(the Magpie, "mag" being a contraction of "Magot" or "Madge," a feminine name formerly bestowed upon this bird), "revyn" (raven), "parthryd," and "quale." "Jay" also appears in its present day spelling and with its Latin equivalent *Graculusque*, which may be the origin of our modern word "Grackle." "Jay" is from old French "gai" equivalent to "gay" (plumage).

In a *Nominale*, or list of words, of fifteenth century date we find "wagsterd" (Wagtail), "nuthage" (Nuthatch), and "buntyle" (Bunting). In a curious pictorial vocabulary, also of the fifteenth century, "Kingfisher" appears as "kynges-fychere" and "Woodpecker" as "wodake" or "woodhock." Our "Redstart" evidently received its name by suggestion from a very different bird of the Old World (*Ruticilla phœnicurus*). It is so called by Catesby (I, 67). "Start" is from Anglo-Saxon "steort" — a tail. "Titmouse" has been transferred to various American species of the family (Catesby figures the "Crested Titmouse," I, 57), the prefix "tit" meaning small. "Mouse" is from Anglo-Saxon *māse*, a name, according to Skeat, for several kinds of small birds and not to be confounded with the mammal of the same name. Hence, the plural "titmouses," not "titmice," is the proper form though usage has established it otherwise. "Shrike" is another name transferred from European to allied American species. The name probably had its origin in the voice of this bird or of some thrush, and later bestowed upon the members of the Laniidæ (see Newton, *Dict. of Birds*, 843). "Martin" (and its older form "Martlet") was evidently a nickname applied to a European Swallow (*Chelidon urbica*) and given by the colonists to our species of the genus *Progne*. Bartram calls the bird "The great purple martin."

"Blackbird," applied to certain American species of Icteridæ, is a name suggested purely by color. Catesby early gave to our *Agelaius phœniceus* its more nearly correct title of "Red-wing'd Starling" (I, 13). Kalm (Forster) uses the older form "stare" (*Eng. Trans.*, II, 73-79) and likewise refers to the species of *Quiscalus* as "blackbirds," remarking that "The English call them *blackbirds*" (*Eng. Trans.*, I, 291). Our Goldfinch appears first in Catesby as "The American Goldfinch" (I, 43), the name clearly borrowed from the Old World *Carduelis elegans*. "Siskin" in like manner comes from the Old World, the word being originally

of Scandinavian origin and meaning "chirper" or "piper." "Snow Bunting" is the old name of *Plectrophenax nivalis* and should rightly replace the fanciful "Snowflake." Our "Tree Sparrow" is the result of a confusion of the American species (*Spizella monticola*) with the Mountain or Tree Sparrow of Europe (*Passer montanus*). This was corrected by Pennant, but the name "tree" was retained.

A rather curious case of name transfer is that of our Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*). The bird first appears under this title in Catesby's Work (I, 50), and was evidently so-called by him in a mistaken idea that it was related to the birds of the same name belonging to the European genus *Saxicola*. This fact is made evident by the Latin word *ananthe* used in the descriptive designation.

The name "buzzard" as applied to the Turkey Vulture appears early in the literature of American birds. Catesby calls it "Turkey Buzzard" (I, 6). As an old English name of Norman French derivation (*Busard*, Latin *Buteo*) it had, as Newton points out (Dict. of Birds, 767), a definite meaning in relation to the old sport of "hawking." Birds of the genera *Buteo* and *Circus* (Harrier) were styled "buzzards" (more especially the species of the former genus), of slow and heavy flight, and "were regarded with infinite scorn, and hence in common English to call a man a buzzard is to denounce him as stupid." With the exception of eagles and owls and a few kites all birds of prey in this country are termed "hawks," and "buzzard" has been relegated to this slow-moving, carrion-feeding species.

II. NAMES DERIVED FROM A LATIN EQUIVALENT.

Several of our English bird names have come into every-day speech by the anglicizing of their generic titles. The Linnæan genus *Oriolus* (from "Oriole," Latin *aurum*, gold) included certain species of Icteridæ which though very different from the European *Oriolus galbula*, still bear its name. "Junco" and "Vireo" are anglicized generic names. The word "grackle" applied to certain species of our Icteridæ appears to be an anglicized word derived from the Linnæan genus *Gracula*. The word

originally referred to the daw or jackdaw of Europe and the relationship between the American birds and the European species, though somewhat distant, was recognized by early writers. *Quiscalus quiscula* appears in Catesby as "The Purple Jackdaw" (I, 12). Bartram calls it the "Lesser purple jackdaw or crow blackbird" (the first notice I have found of this last common name). Wilson calls it the "Purple Grackle," from which source it has without doubt spread into the current vernacular of ornithology, though not into the speech of the people at large.

The name "Parula" recently in vogue for the warblers of the genus *Compsothlypis* is clearly borrowed from the old Bonaparte genus *Parula* (diminutive of titmouse). The bird (*C. americana*) has appeared under various titles — "the Finch Creeper" of Catesby (I, 64), "the various coloured little finch creeper" of Bartram (Travels, 292), and the "Blue Yellow-backed Warbler" of Wilson, Audubon and later authors.

In "Kinglet" we have a word rendered into English from the generic name *Regulus* (Cuvier) though its use is somewhat recent, "wren" being the vernacular designation of the species of *Regulus* until a comparatively late period. Edwards (Gleanings, V, 95) refers to the species as "Le Roitelet" (also Buffon).

"Tanager" is another derived word from the Linnæan genus *Tanagra*, probably of Brazilian origin (Marcgrave, Hist. Rer. Nat. Bras., 214).

III. NAMES SUGGESTED BY VOICE.

In this group, and in the ones that follow, the vernacular names are more specific in their nature, indicative of some peculiar feature or habit of a species. Bird voices have been embodied from the earliest times in various expressive syllables which have given rise to a variety of names. "Cuckoo" was one of these, and in like manner "Wren," "Crow" and other bird names of the Old World. The babble of our voluble Chat, as we have seen, undoubtedly led Catesby to ally the bird with a group of very different species. In America the colonists soon found names by which to designate a number of birds from peculiarities in their vocal performances. Latham speaks of the "Phœbe-bird" (*Sayornis*

fuscus), unquestionably given him by some transatlantic correspondent. Our name "pewee" is given "pewit" by Bartram. Wilson named the "Wood Pewee" (*Contopus virens*) from its voice and its habitat.

The older writers give "Rice-bird" as the chief caption of *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (Catesby, I, 14) and Bartram calls the male "the pied rice bird." Wilson calls it "Rice bird," but mentions its other names — "Boblink" and "Reedbird." Nuttall, as a good New Englander, gives "Bob-o-link" as its principal name, and Barton, in his 'Fragments,' has "Bob-Lincoln." I find this last title also in a sketch of the English writer William Hazlitt (1785). These are the earliest references I can find to this song name of the bird which appears to have been early in use throughout New York and New England.

Among the current specific appellations of certain Sparrows some recent changes are noteworthy.

The "Yellow winged Sparrow" of Wilson is now the "Grasshopper Sparrow," the first allusion to its grasshopper-like notes being, as far as I can find, in Coues's 'Birds of the Northwest' (page 133). We owe the attractive name of "Vesper Sparrow" to John Burroughs (Wake Robin) which has superceded the older "Grass finch" of Pennant and Gmelin and the "Bay-winged Finch" of Wilson. The "Chipping Sparrow" is through Wilson from the earlier "little house sparrow or chipping bird" of Bartram. "Song Sparrow" unquestionably originated through Wilson, as also the specific title *melodia*. Catesby (I, 34) figures and describes "The Towhe-bird" (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). Wilson speaks of its name in Pennsylvania as "Chewink." "Towhee" is a later form of the word by adding an additional "e." "Swamp Robin" and (in Virginia) "Bulfinch" are other names mentioned by Wilson.

"Pipit" is an old English name applied to the Titlarks (*Anthus*) and is derived through "peep" from "pipe", imitative of the bird's note.

Catesby calls the Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) "The Mock Bird," though Bartram gives it its modern form. "Catbird" appears as such in Catesby (I, 66) and Bartram adds "Chicken bird" as a synonym (Travels, 290). "Chickadee" as a general

imitative vernacular name for the species of *Parus* I find first in Audubon. The name "Veery," given to the Tawny Thrush (*Turdus fuscescens*) in imitation of its note, is first used as a synonym by Nuttall.

"Warbler," as a general term for small song birds of the Old World family Sylviidæ, has come down from a word in several of the old European tongues (Old French, Old High German, Middle English — *Werbler*, *Werbelen*), meaning to whirl, run round, warble, as a bird (Skeat). In its special application to the species of *Sylvia*, which we owe to Pennant (1773), it included the American Warblers (Mniotiltidæ) which were later separated as a distinct family (Sylvicolidæ) under the title of "Wood Warblers." "Wood Warbler," however, has not prevailed and "Warbler" continues to be the current vernacular for the various species of this characteristic American family, though, as we are well aware, the name belies the insect-like notes, drawling monotones, lispings, and wheezing performances of the majority of the species. A few do really warble in the accepted sense of the term (*Geothlypis*), but most speak in a tongue peculiarly their own.

Kalm (Travels, Eng. Trans., II, 151) speaks of "Whip-poor-will" as the English name of *Antrostomus vociferus*. A confusion appears in Bartram (Travels, 292), who has it "Night hawk or Whip-poor-will." *Antrostomus carolinensis* is called by Bartram (292) "the great bat, or Chuck Wills Widow." "Night-hawk" is given by Wilson, though this species (*Chordeiles virginianus*) appears to have been described by Catesby under the name of "The Goat-sucker of Carolina" (I, 8).

Colinus virginianus has long proclaimed his proper title of "Bob-White," which has now become the accepted name of the species, superceding the older and less distinctive terms of "quail" and "partridge."

IV. NAMES SUGGESTED BY SOME PECULIAR HABIT OR HABITAT.

"Flycatcher" is a name of obvious application given to an Old World group of birds. From the peculiar habits of certain American species the term "Tyrant Flycatchers" has become current. The "Kingbird" is first so-called by Bartram. Catesby figures the

species as "The Tyrant," whence the name of general application. Wilson speaks of its name in Maryland as the "Field Martin," and "Bee Martin" is another name in certain localities.

"Gnatcatcher" is a name that first appears in Audubon, from the Swainsonian genus *Culicivora*. The species (*Polioptila cærulea*) was originally "the little bluish grey wren" of Bartram (Travels, 291), and later the "Small Blue Grey Flycatcher" of Wilson (A. O., II, 164)."

Several species of Warblers early received names indicative of peculiar habits. The Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorus*) of Wilson and later authors was originally "The Worm-eater" (Edwards, Gleanings), from Bartram; also Latham and Pennant from the same source. The Pine-creeping Warbler (*Dendroica vigorsii*) of Wilson was the "Pine Creeper" of Catesby (I, 61). Edwards (Gleanings, 92) quoting a letter from Bartram says of *Seiurus aurocapillus* that it "builds its nest upon the ground, and always chooses the south side of a hill; that it makes a hole in the leaves, like a little oven, and lines it with dry grass," etc. This is the first reference I have found of the familiar vernacular "Oven-bird," although Edwards calls the species "Golden-crowned Thrush." "Water Thrush" and "Wagtail" were names early given to the other species of the genus, and Pennant speaks of one as the "New York Warbler" (Arct. Zoöl., II, 308) whence its old specific name of *noveboracensis*. The vernacular "Myrtle Bird" first appears in Nuttall, hence probably "Myrtle Warbler" of authors, though early accounts speak of the bird's fondness for the berries of the Wax Myrtle (*Myrica*). Catesby calls it "The Yellow-rump" (I, 58) and Edwards (Glean., VI, pl. 298) "The Golden-crowned Flycatcher." The Magnolia Warbler was found by Wilson "among the magnolias, not far from fort Adams on the Mississippi." He called it the "Black and Yellow Warbler, *Sylvia Magnolia*" (A. O., III, 63), hence "Magnolia Warbler" of later authors. *Dendroica palmarum*, the "Palm Warbler" of Latham (Synop., II, 491), is the "Yellow red pole" of Edwards (*Parus aureus vertice rubro* of Bartram) and the "Yellow red-poll Warbler" of Wilson. Wilson called *Dendroica discolor* the "Prairie Warbler" from the open tracts of Kentucky where he first found it.

Of the Sparrows several species have received names indicative

of habitat. The "little field sparrow" of Bartram became the "Field Sparrow" of Wilson and later authors ("Bush Sparrow" of Burroughs). Wilson first bestowed the vernacular title of "Swamp Sparrow" upon *Melospiza georgiana*, though it was known to Bartram as "The reed sparrow." In like manner the name "Seaside Finch" was given by Wilson to *Ammodramus maritimus* from habitat (A. O., IV, 68). *Junco hyemalis* was called "Snow-bird" by the early settlers from the fact of its appearance in the late autumn and at the onset of winter in the coastal plain region (Catesby, Kalm, Wilson, and later authors). "Junco" is a comparatively late adoption in order to avoid confusion with the Snow Bunting — *Plectrophenax nivalis*).

The "House Wren" is so called by Bartram (Travels, 291) and the "Marsh Wren" likewise (the latter most likely referring to the long-billed species). Wilson, correcting earlier errors, gave the title "Winter Wren" to *T. hiemalis*.

"Chimney Swallow" is an old name for the "Chimney Swift" (*Chætura pelagica*) and is given as such by Kalm, Bartram and early writers.

"*T. melodes* — the wood thrush" is so called by Bartram (Travels, 290). Wilson named the "Hermit Thrush" (*T. solitaria*, A. O., V, 95) from its habitat and its retiring habits.

The Cowbird was "The Cow-pen Bird" of Catesby (I, 34) and likewise of Audubon, and the "Cow Bunting" of Wilson. "Meadow Lark" first appears in Wilson. Bartram calls it "The great meadow lark," and Catesby "The Large Lark" (I, 33). Pennant, nearer the truth, calls it the "Crescent Stare" (Arct. Zoöl., 192). Wilson also speaks of "Old field lark" as its common name in Virginia. The "Shore Lark" is so called by Pennant. Catesby calls it "The Lark" (I, 32), Bartram the "Skylark," and Wilson the "Horned Lark."

Several of our American Swallows received names indicative of habit or habitat — "Barn Swallow" originated as a specific title with Barton (*horreorum*, Fragments, 1799). It was the "House Swallow" of Bartram. The Bank Swallow is the "Bank Martin" of Bartram. "Cliff" and "Eave" Swallow are names of *Petrochelidon lunifrons* according to the particular nesting site adopted by this species. I have failed to find any early reference to the name

"Tree Swallow" for *T. bicolor* — the "White-bellied Swallow" of earlier authors. It appears to have come into use at a comparatively late period.

Bartram speaks of *Ampelis cedrorum* as "Crown Bird" or "Cedar bird" (Travels, 290), the latter its current name.

V. NAMES SUGGESTED BY COLOR OR OTHER EXTERNAL FEATURE.

A large number of our American bird names owe their origin to color or to some conspicuous external feature. The "Great crested Flycatcher" of Wilson is the "Great Crested Yellow bellied Flycatcher" of Bartram and "The Crested Flycatcher" of Catesby, (I, 52). The word "Great" evidently originated with Bartram. "Baltimore," as applied in the vernacular to *Icterus galbula*, was first used in ornithological literature by Catesby — "The Baltimore-Bird" (I, 48) — the name being derived from its color pattern, that of the livery of the Calverts (Lord Baltimore). Bartram calls it "Baltimore bird or hang nest." The specific appellation "Orchard" appears first to have been bestowed by Wilson upon *Icterus spurius* which was the "Bastard Baltimore" of Catesby (I, 49). Wilson goes to some length to set things right concerning this species. "Scarlet" as applied to the Tanager (*Piranga erythromelas*) appears first in Edwards (Gleanings, 343) as the "Scarlet Sparrow." Pennant calls this species "Canada Tanager." The "Summer Redbird" is so called and figured by Catesby (I, 56). Bartram speaks of it as the "Sandhill redbird of Carolina." Among the Sparrows and Grosbeaks there are a number of species the names of which have a color origin. "Red poll," given to a species of *Acanthis*, appears as the "Lesser red-headed Linnet" and "Lesser Redpole," of Ray and Pennant. "Linnet" is an ancient name common in several European languages and is in reference to the fondness of these birds for the seeds of the flax (*Linum*). Bartram undoubtedly refers to this species (*Acanthis linaria*) under the name of "hemp bird." "Purple" as applied to *Carpodacus purpureus* first appears in Catesby's work (I, 41) as "Purple Finch" and is a monumental witness of an inability to properly discriminate either between two very different shades of

color or in the use of the right word. "White-throated Sparrow" is so called by Edwards from a drawing of the species sent him by Bartram who speaks of it in his 'Travels' as "The large brown white throat sparrow." *Zonotrichia leucophrys* is the "White-crowned Bunting" of Pennant. The vernacular of *Passerella iliaca* has been contracted from the earlier "Fox-coloured" (or "colored") to simple "Fox Sparrow." Bartram calls it "The red, or fox coloured ground or hedge sparrow." Barton, in his 'Fragments,' speaks of this species' name in New York as "the Shepherd" (Fragments, 15). Our modern "Cardinal" is undoubtedly of French origin. Catesby gives it its English title of "Red-bird" and also "Le Cardinal" (I, 38). It is "The red-bird or Virginia Nightingale" of Bartram and other early writers. Catesby figures *Guiraca cœrulea* as "The Blew Grosbeak" (I, 39). "Rose-breasted" (Wilson) may be traced to *Le Rose Gorge* of Buffon and "Red-breasted Grosbeak" of Pennant. *Passerina cyanea* is "The Blew Linnet" of Catesby (I, 45), who further alludes to it as the "Indigo-bird of Americans." The "Painted Finch" (*P. ciris*) is so called by Catesby, and Bartram likewise adds its other title of "Nonpariel." "Lazuli" was bestowed upon *P. amœna* by Say (Long's Exp., II, 47, 1823).

Pennant first uses the name "Black-throated Bunting" for *Spiza americana*, but Bartram mentions this species under the title "*Calandra pratensis*, the May bird" (Travels, 291). "Dickcissel," its modern name, appears to have originated through Mr. Robert Ridgway from Middle West localities (Coues, Birds of the North West, 166). Wilson borrowed the term "sharp-tailed" for *Ammodramus caudacutus* from Turton (Syst., 562). "Lark," as applied to two species of Fringillidæ — *Chondestes grammacus* and *Calamospiza melanocorys* — was bestowed upon these different birds, in the one case by Say and in the other by Townsend, in view of their lark-like appearance and habits.

Among the Warblers we have a host of color names. "Mourning Warbler" we owe to its discoverer Wilson. The Summer Warbler or "Yellow Warbler" (*Dendroica aestiva*) was "the Yellow Titmouse of Catesby (I, 63), "the summer Yellow-bird" of Bartram, the "Yellow-poll" of Latham and Pennant and the "Blue-eyed Yellow Warbler of Wilson. Say first described the

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Helminthophila celata*) (Long's Exp., 1823). *Mniotilta varia* was the "Black and White Creeper" of Edwards (Glean., Vol. VI, received from Bartram who gave it its name). In his "Travels" Bartram calls it the "blue and white striped or pied creeper" (p. 289). Of the Prothonotary Warbler Pennant (Arct. Zoöl., II, 30) says: "Inhabits *Louisiana*. Called there *le Protonotaria*; but the reason has not reached us." Probably in allusion to the vestures of that office. Many species of warblers were earlier known by the various names of "flycatcher," "titmouse," and "creeper" according to their peculiar habits, the specific vernacular being mainly in relation to color. *Dendroica caerulescens* was the "Blue Flycatcher" of Edwards (Glean., pl. 252 — received from Bartram); the "Black-throat" of Pennant (Arct. Zool., II, 285); the "Black-throated Warbler" of Latham, and the "Black-throated Blue Warbler" as first applied by Wilson. Wilson first named the "Caerulean Warbler." The "Black poll Warbler" appears as such in Latham and Pennant, "poll" or "pole" being an early name for "head" as in our "poll tax." The Yellow-throated Warbler (*D. dominica*) was "The Yellow-throated Creeper" of Catesby (I, 61). The "Blue Winged Yellow Warbler" (*Helminthophila pinus*) was formerly confused with the "Pine creeper" of Catesby (*D. vigorsii*), hence *pinus* as applied to this species of *Helminthophila*. Its vernacular is a clear translation by Wilson of Bartram's "*Parus aureus alis ceruleis* — Blue winged yellow bird." In like manner *H. chrysoptera* was the "*Parus alis aureus*" of Bartram, the "Golden-winged Flycatcher" of Edwards (from Bartram), and the "Golden-winged Warbler" of Wilson and later authors. Wilson first bestowed the names "Bay-breasted" and "Chestnut-sided" upon *D. castanea* and *D. pensylvanica*. The former was Bartram's "little chocolate breast titmouse" (Travels, 292) and the latter his "golden crown flycatcher." This last species, also, was the "Red-throated Flycatcher" of Edwards and the "Bloody-side Warbler" of Turton as a result of Edwards's badly colored plate. *D. virens* was the "Green Black-throated Flycatcher" of Bartram and the "Black-throated Green Flycatcher" of Edwards (Glean., VI, pl. 300, from Bartram). The "Hooded Warbler" (*Sylvania mitrata*) is figured by Catesby under the name of "The Hooded Titmouse" (I, 60).

"Black-cap Titmouse" is Bartram's name for the species (*Parus atricapillus*) and probably also its near relative *P. carolinensis*. The "Olive-backed Thrush" was first so-called by Giraud (Birds of Long Island, 1844, 92). *T. fuscescens* was called "Tawny Thrush" by Wilson. "Bluebird" is an early name. The species is figured by Catesby (I, 47) as "The Blew-Bird." Pennant called it the "Blue-Backed Red-Breast" (Arct. Zool., II, 91). *Lanius ludovicianus* was called the "Logger head Shrike" or "Loggerhead" by Wilson, as its common name in the South.

Most of our species of Woodpeckers early received their names from color markings or other external feature, as "red-headed," "yellow-bellied," "golden-winged," "pileated," "downy," "hairy," "ivory-billed," etc. The word "Flicker," as a vernacular of *Colaptes auratus*, probably originated from the bird's call notes. It is referred to by Wilson.

VI. NAMES SUGGESTED BY LOCALITY (PLACE-NAMES) OR IN HONOR OF SOME PERSON.

A curious misapprehension as to the significance of the current English name of *Ammodramus sandwichensis savanna* seems to exist in ornithological literature as revealed by its orthography. Wilson distinctly refers to the city of Savannah as the locality where he states he first discovered the species (A. O., III, 55) and he so spells its name in the English title. Its specific name, however, he gives as "savanna." In our current literature this last appears as the method of spelling the bird's name in English, which is clearly misleading. In its general application "savanna" might be very appropriate in view of the species' habitat, but Wilson intended it otherwise and "Savannah Sparrow" is the proper form of the English name.

The term "Evening" in the vernacular of *Hesperiphona vespertina* as given to the species by Cooper (Annals N. Y. Lyceum Nat. Hist., I, 220) conveys, as does the scientific name, the idea of the west or the place of sunset.

Geothlypis trichas was called by Bartram "The olive coloured yellowthroated wren" (Travels, 292). Of the bird's present English name I find the following interesting reference in Edward's

Gleanings (Vol. V, 57): "J. Petiver, in his *Gazophylacium*, plate vi, has given the figure of a bird, which I believe to be the same with this; for which reason I continue the name he has given it. . . . '*Avis Marylandica gutture luteo*, the Maryland Yellow-throat. This the Rev. Mr. H. Jones sent me from Maryland'. " Edwards later received the bird from Bartram with a drawing "very neatly and exactly done, by Mr. William Bartram, of Pennsylvania, who hath enabled me to give a further account of this bird, for he says, it frequents thickets and low bushes by runs (of water, I suppose, he means) and low grounds; it leaves Pennsylvania at the approach of winter, and is supposed to go to a warmer climate."

To Wilson we owe the place-names of five of our species of Warblers — the Kentucky, Connecticut, Tennessee, Nashville, and Cape May — from the State or locality of the first capture by him of the species in question. John Cassin named a species of Vireo "Philadelphia" after the city in the neighborhood of which he obtained his type specimen.

Thryothorus ludovicianus obtained its vernacular through Bartram — "(regulus magnus) the great wren of Carolina" (Travels, 291). This Wilson transposed into "Great Carolina Wren."

The "Blackburnian Warbler" is so called by Pennant and Latham, and is evidently named in honor of the owner of the Blackburn Museum in London.

A number of our birds acquired their names in the first half of the last century in honor of certain persons known to their describers — as Lincoln's, Henslow's, LeConte's, and Harris's Sparrows; Townsend's, Audubon's, Swainson's, and Bachman's Warblers; Lewis's Woodpecker; Clark's Nutcracker; Steller's and Woodhouses's Jays, and many others of early and recent date.

"Louisiana" as applied to the species of Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) and to the Water-Thrush (*Seiurus motacilla*) refers to the region embraced in the Louisiana Purchase, not to the present State of that name. "Florida," "Canada," "California," "Hudsonian" and other regional names have in like manner been applied to certain species, as "Florida Jay," "Canada Jay," "Canadian Warbler," "California Woodpecker," "Hudsonian Chickadee," and so forth.

The matter as presented in the foregoing sketch does not pretend to list all of the species and varieties of North American land birds. It is only a sketch or outline of a most attractive subject and was written partly for the purpose of gathering together what knowledge we have of the history and origin of our more familiar bird names.

SUMMER BIRDS OF IRON COUNTY, MICHIGAN.

BY ELIOT BLACKWELDER.

THE birds in the following list were seen in Iron County, Michigan, and adjacent portions of Dickinson and Menominee Counties during June, July and August, 1908. The writer was engaged in geological surveying, in the course of which he spent nearly three months in the woods and traversed the region somewhat thoroughly in different directions. The notes on birds were kept in the form of a daily record, or a "roll-call," as we often referred to it in the field.

The region is one of low hills and plains of glacial drift, through which small rocky knobs protrude here and there. The entire district was once heavily forested, but the coniferous woods have been largely cut off and the remaining "slash" has been repeatedly burned. Where fires have not been excessively damaging, the original forest is being replaced by thickets of birch and poplar with dense undergrowth of blackberry bushes and other shrubs. The clay ridges, such as the glacial moraines and drumlins, were clad with dense forests of hard maple, birch and hemlock. Only a small portion of this hardwood forest has been lumbered, although the rate of cutting is constantly increasing. Where the forests are untouched they are generally open below,—the large trees, with their dense shade, preventing the growth of underbrush. Where the timber has been removed, however, the second growth is hazel and maple brush with dense berry bushes. The pine forests were largely on the sand plains, and those localities have